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COLLEGE PLANS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS: OCTOBER 1973

A slightly lower proportion of high school seniors attending school in October 1973 were planning to attend college after graduation than were seniors enrolled a year earlier--42 percent in 1973 compared with 45 percent in 1972. The difference between the 1972 and the 1973 figures was statistically significant with 90 percent probability. The decline in the proportion of seniors who had definite plans to enter college is consistent with a decline in college participation rates among 18- and 19-year-olds during the past four years.[1] The proportion of students who plan to or who may enter vocational or trade schools has not changed measurably between these two years; however, the proportion of seniors who indicated that they had no plans to enter either college or postsecondary schools after high school graduation has increased.

Forty-two percent of high school seniors expressed that they had definite plans to enter college and another 28 percent expressed somewhat less definite plans (that is, they indicated that they "may" enter college). Of the seniors with some plans to attend college, representing 70 percent of 1973 high school seniors, 83 percent were planning to enroll in the fall of 1974; however, 95 percent of those with definite plans were intending to enter in fall 1974 (table 2).

About 7 percent of all high school seniors had definite plans to enter a two-year college and 25 percent had definite plans to enter a four-year college. Another 10 percent of all seniors had definite plans to enter college but chose both a two-year and a four-year college, either because they were uncertain in October which school they would enter or because they actually planned to enter first a junior college then a four-year college. Only 5 percent of all high school seniors expressed a definite plan to enter a vocational, technical, or trade school following high school graduation, but an additional 5 percent said that they "may" attend that type of school (table 1).

Most students who expected to enroll in a four-year college were quite definite about their plans. Those who indicated intentions to attend either a two-year or both a two-year and a four-year school were much less likely to state definite plans to attend:

College plans	Type of college choice		
	Two-year college	Four-year college	Two-year and four-year college
Percent who plan to attend college.	50	92	34
Percent who may attend college....	50	8	66

[1] School Enrollment in the United States, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 261.

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, and U.S. Department of Commerce district offices. Price 40 cents. Current Population Reports issued in Series P-20, P-23, P-25, P-26, P-27, P-28 (summaries only), P-60, and P-65 are sold as a single consolidated subscription at $30.50 per year, $7.75 additional for foreign mailing.

Table A. COLLEGE PLANS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, BY SEX AND RACE: OCTOBER 1973 AND 1972

Year, race, and sex	Number (thousands)	Percent of total			
		Plan to attend college	May attend college	Plan to or may attend vocational school	Do not plan to attend any school
1973					
Total	3,408	42.1	27.9	10.7	17.5
Male	1,747	42.5	28,0	9.4	17.9
Female	1,662	41.7	27.8	12.0	17.0
White	2,910	42.4	27.1	11.0	17.8
Negro	460	37.8	33.4	9.7	17.1
1972					
Total	3,300	45.4	26.7	11.8	14.4
Male	1,713	45.0	29.0	10.0	13.5
Female	1,587	45.9	24.1	13.7	15.3
White	2,834	45.6	25.9	11.8	14.9
Negro	420	43.8	32.9	11.2	10.7

Of the 460,000 black high school seniors in October 1973, 174,000, or about 38 percent, had definite plans to attend college. Another 154,000 reported that they might attend college (33 percent). Thus, approximately seven out of ten black high school seniors were considering college attendance in the fall of 1973. This figure is not significantly different either from the comparable rate for black seniors in October 1972, or from the comparable rate for October 1973 white seniors.

Students attending private high schools were more likely than those attending public high schools to report plans to attend college. Of all private high school seniors, 84 percent reported that they planned to attend or might attend college. The comparable figure for students in public high schools was 69 percent (table 1).

This information on the postsecondary school plans was asked of persons during October of their senior year, probably before many students had made firm plans for their postsecondary schooling. However, comparisons of enrollment rates and expressed college plans in 1972 and 1973 indicate that the proportion of high school seniors who planned to enter college was close to the actual rate of college enrollment in the following year. Of all high school seniors enrolled in October 1972, 45 percent stated that they had planned to enter college. Most of these students would have graduated from high school in June 1973. Current Population Survey data on the enrollment of seniors in the fall of 1973 indicated that 46 percent of all those graduating from high school in that year enrolled in college, which is about the same proportion as those who planned to attend in the previous year.

Since figures presented in this report are based on sample data, they may differ from the figures that would have been obtained from a complete census. The sampling variation may be relatively large where the numbers shown are small.

RELATED REPORTS

Data on college plans of high school seniors for October 1972 were published in Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 252. Statistics on school enrollment for October 1973 were presented in Series P-20, No. 261. Statistics on school enrollment in October for years prior to 1973 have been published annually in the P-20 Series of the Current Population Reports.

Data on characteristics of high school seniors by graduation status and high school graduates by college attendance status are presented in "Factors Related to High School Graduation and College Attendance: 1967," Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 185. Data on college plans and college attendance of high school graduates were also presented in "Factors Related to College Attendance of Farm and Nonfarm High School Graduates: 1960," Farm Population, Series Census-ERS(P-27), No. 32 and "Educational Status, College Plans, and Occupational Status of Farm and Nonfarm Youths: October 1959," Farm Population, Series Census-ERS (P-27), No. 30. Statistics on college attendance and related factors, including type of college, living arrangements, marital status, field of specialization and college rank, can be found in "Characteristics of Students and Their Colleges: October 1966," Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 183.

1960 and 1970 census data. Statistics on school enrollment for cities, standard metropolitan statistical areas, States, regions and the United States appear in reports of the decennial censuses. Detailed statistics on school enrollment by age and socioeconomic characteristics for regions and the United States are presented in Subject Reports of the 1970 census, especially in PC(2)-5A, School Enrollment.

Figures on school enrollment from the October Current Population Surveys differ from decennial census data for reasons in addition to the difference in the dates. In the first place, the survey data exclude the institutional population and members of the Armed Forces. These two groups were included in the census. Second, there were differences in field work. The small group of Current Population Survey enumerators were more experienced and had more intensive training and supervision than the large number of temporary census enumerators and may have more often obtained more accurate answers from respondents. Third, the census was taken in April and relates to enrollment since February 1, whereas the surveys were taken in October and relate to enrollment in the current term. This difference in months of the year affects not only the extent of school enrollment (through "dropouts" during the school year, etc.) but also the level of school in which persons of a given age are enrolled.

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

Population coverage. The data presented here are for the civilian noninstitutional population 14 to 34 years old.

Metropolitan-nonmetropolitan residence. The population residing in standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA's) constitutes the metropolitan population. Except in New England, an SMSA is a county or group of contiguous counties which contains at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more, or "twin cities" with a combined population of at least 50,000. In addition to the county, or counties, containing such a city or cities, contiguous counties are included in an SMSA if, according to certain criteria, they are essentially metropolitan in character and are socially and economically integrated with the central city. In New England, SMSA's consist of towns and cities, rather than counties. The metropolitan population in this report is based on SMSA's as defined in the 1970 census and does not include any subsequent additions or changes.

The population inside SMSA's is further classified as "in central cities" and "outside central cities." With a few exceptions, central cities are determined according to the following criteria:

1. The largest city in an SMSA is always a central city.

2. One or two additional cities may be secondary central cities on the basis and in the order of the following criteria:

   a. The additional city or cities have at least 250,000 inhabitants.

   b. The additional city or cities have a population of one-third or more of that of the largest city and a minimum population of 25,000.

Geographic regions. The four major regions of the United States, for which data are presented in this report, represent groups of States, as follows:

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

North Central: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

West: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Age. The age classification is based on the age of the person at his last birthday.

Race. The population is divided into three groups on the basis of race: white, Negro, and "other races." The last category includes Indians, Japanese, Chinese, and any other race except white and Negro.

Persons of Spanish origin. Persons of Spanish origin in this report are those persons who indicated that their origin was Mexican-American, Chicano, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or "Other Spanish." Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

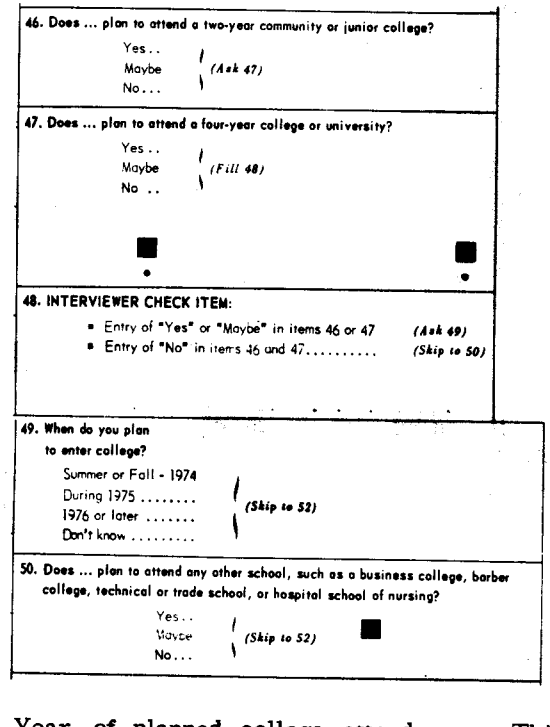
Family. The term "family," as used here, refers to a group of two persons or more related by blood, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such persons are considered as members of one family.

Primary family. A primary family is a family that includes among its members the head of a household.

Head of family. One person in each family residing together was designated as the head. The head of a family is usually the person regarded as the head by members of the family. Women are not classified as heads if their husbands are resident members of the family at the time of the survey.

High school seniors. Persons were classified as high school seniors who were enrolled in the fourth year of a "regular" high school in October 1973. As defined in the survey, a "regular" high school is one which may advance a person toward a high school diploma. Examples of schools which are not regarded as "regular" schools are private business and trade schools, such as television repair schools, beautician schools, and secretarial schools.

College plans. Information on college plans was derived from responses of high school seniors in October 1973 to questions as to whether they planned to attend college, and if so the type of college they planned to attend (two-year, four-year or both). If the students did not plan to attend college, they were asked whether they planned to attend any other type of school (see facsimile of questions below).


46. Does ... plan to attend a two-year community or junior college?
Yes.. / Maybe / No... \ (Ask 47)
47. Does ... plan to attend a four-year college or university?
Yes.. / Maybe / No .. \ (Fill 48)
48. INTERVIEWER CHECK ITEM:
• Entry of "Yes" or "Maybe" in items 46 or 47 (Ask 49)
• Entry of "No" in items 46 and 47..... (Skip to 50)
49. When do you plan to enter college?
Summer or Fall - 1974
During 1975 ..... / 1976 or later ..... / Don't know ..... (Skip to 52)
50. Does ... plan to attend any other school, such as a business college, barber college, technical or trade school, or hospital school of nursing?
Yes.. / Maybe / No... (Skip to 52)

Year of planned college attendance. This refers to the calendar year of planned enrollment, not to academic year which usually includes parts of two calendar years.

In not all of the cases was the respondent to these items the high school senior himself. If the student were not present, the typical proxy reporting would be his or her mother. A relative of the specific individual, reporting for the student, would likely have some idea of the person's future educational plans.

The table below lists possible combinations of responses to items 47 and 48 and the column in tables 1 through 3 in which the students were classified:

Column heads in tables 1 to 3	Responses to--	
	Item 47	Item 48
Plan to attend college:		
2-year college only.....	yes	no
	yes	blank
4-year college only.....	no	yes
	blank	yes
Both 2-year and 4-year college	yes	yes
	yes	maybe
	maybe	yes
May attend college:		
2-year college only.....	maybe	no
	maybe	blank
4-year college only.....	no	maybe
	blank	maybe
Both 2-year and 4-year college	maybe	maybe
Do not plan to attend college...	no	blank
	no	no
	blank	no
Not reported.....	blank	blank

Public or private school. In this report, a public school is defined as any educational institution operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials and supported by public funds. Private schools included educational institutions established and operated by religious bodies, as well as those which are under other private control. In cases where enrollment was in a school or college which was both publicly and privately controlled or supported, enrollment was counted according to whether it was primarily public or private.

Rounding of estimates. Individual figures are rounded to the nearest thousand without being adjusted to group totals, which are independently rounded. With few exceptions, percentages are based on the unrounded absolute numbers.

SOURCE AND RELIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES

Source of data. The estimates are based on data obtained in October of 1973 in the Current Population Survey of the Bureau of the Census. The current sample is spread over 461 areas comprising 923 counties and independent cities with coverage in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia. Approximately 47,000 occupied housing units are eligible for interview each month. Of this number, 2,000 occupied units, on the average, are visited but interviews are not obtained because the occupants are not found at home after repeated calls or are unavailable for some other reason. In addition to the 47,000 there are also about 8,000 sample units in an average month which are visited but are found to be vacant or otherwise not to be interviewed.

The estimating procedure used in this survey involved the inflation of the weighted sample results to independent estimates of the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States by age, race and sex. These independent estimates were based on statistics from the 1970 Census of Population; statistics of births, deaths, immigration, and emigration; and statistics on the strength of the Armed Forces.

Reliability of the estimates. Since the estimates are based on a sample, they may differ somewhat from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken using the same schedules, instructions, and enumerators. As in any survey work, the results are subject to errors of response and of reporting as well as being subject to sampling variability.

The standard error is primarily a measure of sampling variability, that is, of the variations that occur by chance because a sample rather than the whole of the population is surveyed. As calculated for this report, the standard error also partially measures the effect of response and enumeration errors but does not measure any systematic biases in the data. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate from the sample would differ from a complete census figure by less than the standard error. The chances are about 90 out 100 that the difference would be less than 1.6 times the standard error, and the chances are about 95 out of 100 that the difference would be less than twice the standard error.

All statements of comparison appearing in the text are significant at a 1.6 standard error level or better. Most are significant at a level of more than 2.0 standard errors. Thus, for most differences cited in the text, the estimated difference is greater than twice the standard error of the difference. Statements of comparison qualified in some way (e.g., by use of the phrase "some evidence") have a level of significance between 1.6 and 2.0 standard errors.

The figures presented in tables B, C, D and E are approximations to the standard errors of various estimates shown in this report. In order to derive standard errors that would be applicable to a wide variety of items and could be prepared at a moderate cost, a number of approximations were required. As a result, the tables of standard errors provide an indication of the order of magnitude of the standard errors rather than the precise standard error for any specific items. Tables B and C contain the standard errors of estimated numbers for a given class of persons age 3 to 34 enrolled in school.

The reliability of an estimated percentage, computed by using sample data for both numerator and denominator, depends upon both the size of the percentage and the size of the total upon which the percentage is based. Tables D and E show the standard errors of estimated percentages.

Illustration of the use of the tables of standard errors. Table A of this report shows that in October 1973, 460,000 of the 3,408,000 total high school seniors were Negroes. Interpolation in table B shows the standard error on an estimate of this size to be approximately 29,000. The chances are 68 out of 100 that the estimate would differ from a complete census figure by less than 29,000. The chances are 95 out of 100 that the estimate would differ from a complete census figure by less than 58,000, i.e., this 95 percent confidence interval would be from 402,000 to 518,000.

Table A shows that 42.4 percent of the 2,910,000 white high school seniors planned to attend college. Interpolation in table D shows that the standard error of the estimated 42.4 percent is approximately 1.3 percent. Consequently, chances are 68 out of 100 that the estimated 42.4 percent would be within 1.3 percentage points of a complete census figure, and chances are 95 out of 100 that the estimate would be within 2.6 percentage points of a census figure. That is, this 95 percent confidence interval would be between 39.8 and 45.0 percent.

Table B. Standard Errors for Estimated Numbers of Persons Enrolled in School

Total or White Population

(All numbers in thousands. 68 chances out of 100)

Estimated number of persons	Total persons in age group									
	100	250	500	1,000	2,500	5,000	10,000	25,000	50,000	100,000
10	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
20	6.0	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4
30	6.9	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8
40	7.4	8.6	8.8	8.9	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0
50	7.5	9.5	9.8	10.0	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.1
75	6.5	11.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
100	-	12.0	13.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
200	-	9.5	16.0	19.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
300	-	-	16.0	22.0	24.0	24.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0
400	-	-	13.0	23.0	27.0	28.0	28.0	28.0	29.0	29.0
500	-	-	-	24.0	30.0	31.0	32.0	32.0	32.0	32.0
750	-	-	-	21.0	34.0	38.0	38.0	39.0	39.0	39.0
1,000	-	-	-	-	37.0	42.0	44.0	45.0	45.0	45.0
2,000	-	-	-	-	30.0	52.0	60.0	63.0	63.0	64.0
3,000	-	-	-	-	-	52.0	69.0	76.0	77.0	78.0
4,000	-	-	-	-	-	42.0	74.0	86.0	88.0	89.0
5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	75.0	95.0	98.0	100.0
7,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	65.0	110.0	120.0	120.0
10,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	120.0	130.0	140.0
20,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	95.0	160.0	190.0
30,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	160.0	220.0
40,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	130.0	230.0
50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	240.0
75,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	210.0

Table C. Standard Errors for Estimated Numbers of Persons Enrolled in School

Negro and Other Races

(All numbers in thousands. 68 chances out of 100)

Estimated number of persons	Total persons in age group						
	100	250	500	1,000	2,500	5,000	10,000
10	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2
20	6.6	7.1	7.3	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.4
30	7.6	8.5	8.8	9.0	9.0	9.1	9.1
40	8.2	9.6	10.1	10.3	10.4	10.5	10.5
50	8.3	10.5	11.0	11.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
75	7.3	12.0	13.0	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
100	-	13.0	15.0	16.0	16.0	16.0	17.0
200	-	11.0	18.0	21.0	23.0	23.0	23.0
300	-	-	18.0	24.0	27.0	28.0	28.0
400	-	-	15.0	26.0	30.0	32.0	33.0
500	-	-	-	26.0	33.0	35.0	36.0
750	-	-	-	23.0	38.0	42.0	44.0
1,000	-	-	-	-	41.0	47.0	50.0
2,000	-	-	-	-	34.0	58.0	66.0
3,000	-	-	-	-	-	58.0	76.0
4,000	-	-	-	-	-	48.0	82.0
5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	83.0
7,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	73.0
10,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table D. Standard Errors of Estimated Percentages of Persons Enrolled in School

Total or White Population

(68 chances out of 100)

Estimated percentage	Base of percentage (thousands)									
	100	250	500	1,000	2,500	5,000	10,000	25,000	50,000	100,000
2 or 98	2.0	1.3	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
5 or 95	3.1	2.0	1.4	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1
10 or 90	4.3	2.7	1.9	1.4	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1
25 or 75	6.2	3.9	2.8	2.0	1.2	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.2
50	7.2	4.5	3.2	2.3	1.4	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.2

Table E. Standard Errors of Estimated Persons Enrolled in School

Negro and Other Races

(68 chances out of 100)

Estimated percentage	Base of percentage (thousands)							
	50	100	250	500	1,000	2,500	5,000	10,000
2 or 98	3.3	2.3	1.5	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.2
5 or 95	5.1	3.6	2.3	1.6	1.2	0.7	0.5	0.4
10 or 90	7.1	5.0	3.2	2.2	1.6	1.0	0.7	0.5
25 or 75	10.2	7.2	4.6	3.2	2.3	1.4	1.0	0.7
50	11.8	8.4	5.3	3.7	2.6	1.7	1.2	0.8

Differences. For a difference between two sample estimates, the standard error is approximately equal to the square root of the sum of the squares of the standard errors of each estimate considered separately. This formula will represent the actual standard error quite accurately for the difference between two estimates of the same characteristics in two different areas, or for the difference between separate and uncorrelated characteristics in the same area. If, however, there is a high positive correlation between the two characteristics, the formula will overestimate the true standard error.

Illustration of the computation of the standard error of a difference. Table A shows that 42.1 percent of the 3,408,000 high school seniors planned to attend college in 1973. The corresponding percentage for 1972 was 45.4 percent. The apparent difference between the percentages of 1973 high school seniors and 1972 high school seniors who planned to attend college is 3.3 percent. Interpolation in table D shows that the standard error on 42.1 percent is approximately 1.2 percent. The standard error on 45.4 percent of 1972 high school seniors who planned to attend college is also approximately 1.2 percent. The standard error of the estimated difference of 3.3 percent is about $1.7 = \sqrt{(1.2)^2 + (1.2)^2}$. This means the chances are 68 out of 100 that the estimated difference based on the sample would differ from the change derived using complete census figures by less than 1.7 percent. The 68 percent confidence interval around the 3.3 percent difference is from 1.6 percent to 5.0 percent; i.e., 3.3 ± 1.7 percent. A conclusion that the average estimate of the difference derived from all possible samples lies within a range computed in this way would be correct for roughly 68 percent of all possible samples. The 95 percent confidence interval is from -0.1 percent to 6.7 percent or $3.3 \pm (2 \times 1.7)$ percent. This confidence interval contains the value 0.0 percent, which signifies no evidence of a difference. Thus we cannot conclude with 95 percent confidence that a smaller percentage of high school seniors was planning to attend college in 1973 than in 1972.